

Argentina H

January 17, 1979

Mr. F. Allen Harris
Political Officer
Embassy of the United States
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Dear Tex:

I appreciated your letter of December 13 concerning the stories appearing in the Washington Post and the AFL-CIO news bulletin about the detention and torture of an Argentine citizen.

When you sent that harrowing and heart-rending testimony to me at the request of the individual concerned, we seriously addressed the wish expressed in the Postscript "that the information in the report -- sanitized to disguise the source -- would be widely circulated to international organizations, human rights groups, and to interested governments."

A version was prepared in accordance with this request and circulated to a responsible and select list of private organizations, including two unions, with the proviso that the source of information would remain confidential. In addition, the name of the individual was not revealed. The sanitized version also was circulated to officials in the Department as requested. It was not sent to foreign governments, international organizations or the press.

We tried very hard to disguise the identity of the individual while at the same time releasing information that would provide "the raw material for making strong and factual reports about the situation in Argentina." The Postscript noted that the individual "had no fears for his personal safety as the government had done everything to him that it could except kill him." But, he emphasized, he was concerned about his wife and family who are the ones at risk." As your letter confirmed, "the individual related his experiences to a number of people immediately after his release," despite the risks entailed.

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The AFL-CIO and Freedom House published the sanitized version made available to them. The Washington Post story of October 29 was datelined Buenos Aires. I understand that a representative of the AAAS visiting Buenos Aires made the text available to the Washington Post representative there advising him to check with you and Mr. Mignone prior to filing the story.

You're right; in the future any material we draw upon should be cleared with you to avoid any possible references that could make the person's identity more evident.

With regard to this particular case, I was pleased to read in BA 0066 that the individual was removed from PEN detention and that round-the-clock guards most likely would be removed from his home. Please keep me up-to-date and informed about his security and status and let me know whether any repercussions occur as a result of his making known his experiences.

Thanks for your good wishes upon my marriage. My very best wishes to you, as well as my support and admiration for the important and painstaking efforts you are undertaking on behalf of human rights. You are doing such a fine job under such difficult circumstances.

Best,

Patricia M. Derian
Assistant Secretary for
Human Rights and
Humanitarian Affairs

HA/HR:RCohen
XDS-4 (Derian, Patricia) 1/16/99

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EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Buenos Aires, Argentina

December 13, 1978

SECRET

Ms. Patt Derian
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Human Rights and
Humanitarian Affairs
Department of State
Washington, D.C.

Dear Patt:

I am writing on the sensitive matter of the recent stories appearing in the "Washington Post" and the AFL-CIO news bulletin regarding the detention and torture of an Argentine citizen. I am concerned that some details contained in those articles make identification of the individual in question possible by knowledgeable observers here. Last Sunday, I lunched with Oscar Cardoso, political columnist for "Clarín" (the New York News of Argentina) who assured me that the identity of the individual was widely known.

The problem is twofold. First, the individual related his experiences to a number of people immediately after his release. Secondly, the "Washington Post" and the AFL-CIO articles cited details regarding his captivity which point specifically to that man, such as the length and place of his detention.

As you can imagine, this is a matter of great concern to me. I have indirectly informed the individual concerned that a report of his experiences has been published in the United States. I suggested in my verbally relayed message that there may have been some indications in the U.S. stories which may point to him. I also offered him our good offices should any attempt be made against him.

The GOA reaction to date has been only a few muted cries of anger from the Presidency over the "Washington Post" article. The family of the individual involved reports that there has been no noticeable surveillance of their

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Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP

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home which continues to have around-the-clock guards under the terms of his conditional release. He has, however, recently been fired from his teaching job and the family is in a financial bind. I am trying to get a family member a job with a U.S. firm here.

Today, I am drafting a cable regarding the Argentine clandestine rehabilitation programs. The sources for this telegram are a "rehabilitated" Navy prisoner who expects to be released and the family of a couple being rehabilitated in the Army facility. If the Department draws on this information, it is imperative that I personally clear the material to ensure that the references are generic or better yet disguised so there is no possibility of backtracking the information to identify any live individual.

I am sure you understand my keen sense of responsibility on this.

Absolutely switching gears, I want to close with a hearty abrazo for the new bride and my very best wishes.

Sincerely yours,

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F. Allen Harris
Political Officer

Clearance:
Ambassador Castro *Y*

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